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## **34. Framing telecentres: Accounts of women in rural communities in South Africa and Tanzania**

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### ***Abstract***

Telecentres in rural communities are mostly conceptualized by development agencies and governments as spaces that all community members can go to and access information and communication technologies. While for the technocrats the goals of establishing telecentres might be clear, the same cannot always be said about the people who live in the communities these telecentres were set up and are meant to use and benefit from the facilities. Grounded in the frame theory, this article uses textual analysis to understand the ways in which women in rural communities in South Africa and Tanzania represented the telecentres in their locales. The paper also discusses the possible implications of framing the telecentres in the manner that the women do. A key finding is that most women interviewed in this study viewed the telecentres as places for ‘Other’ people; mostly students and educated people. This paper argues that referring to the telecentres as spaces for ‘Other’ people worked to limit the women from actually using and benefiting from the telecentres. Interestingly, there were some participants who mentioned that the telecentres were meant for everyone yet they themselves did not use them. We recommend that researchers and technocrats need to revisit and rethink the assumptions that informed the setting up of the telecentres in the first place. It might be worthwhile having conversations with community members regarding their present needs and how the telecentres can meet them.

### ***Keywords***

Framing Theory, Rural Communities, South Africa, Tanzania, Telecentres, Users and Non-Users

## **1. Introduction**

The idea of creating spaces for communities to access Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) dates back to the early 1980s in Sweden (Parkinson, 2005). Since then the “telecentre movement” has spread to different parts of the world. Gómez & Reilly (2002 p.57) define telecentres as “physical spaces that provide public access to information and communication technologies, notably the Internet, for educational, personal, social, and economic development”. While most development agencies and governments conceptualised telecentres in ways similar to Gómez & Reilly (2002), this paper attempts to understand the ways in which women residing in rural communities in South Africa and Tanzania speak

about the Centres in their locales. The key research questions that this paper endeavours to respond to are:

1. How do women in rural communities in South Africa and Tanzania frame the telecentres in their communities?
2. What are the possible implications for framing the telecentres in that manner?

Beyond discussing how women in this study speak about the telecentres in their communities, the paper also discusses the possible implications of the frames for women's engagement with the telecentres. The section that follows discusses the theory that was deployed in this study.

## 2. Frame/Framing Theory

As noted in the introduction, this research focuses on the ways in which women in communities in rural South Africa and Tanzania *framed* telecentres. One of the earliest scholars to develop the concept of framing is Sociologist, Erving Goffman. Since then, the idea of frames and framing has been drawn on in various fields such as psychology, sociology, media studies and political science (Borah, 2011). Chong and Druckman (2007) make a distinction between a “*frame in communication or a media frame*” and “*a frame in thought or an individual frame*”. Chong and Druckman (2007 p.100-101) elaborate:

[...] a *media frame* refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker (e.g., a politician, a media outlet) uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; 1989). The chosen frame reveals what the speaker sees as relevant to the topic at hand [...]. A *frame in thought or an individual frame* refers to an individual's cognitive understanding of a given situation (e.g., Goffman, 1974). Unlike frames in communication, which reflect a speaker's emphasis, frames in thought refer to what an audience member believes to be the most salient aspect of an issue.

This paper draws on ideas from the *frame in thought or individual frame*. In defining the latter *frame*, Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli (2013 p.1) explain that:

Frames are the way we see things and define what we see. [...] Frames help us to interpret the world around us and represent that world to others. They help us organize complex phenomena into coherent, understandable categories. When we label a phenomenon, we give meaning to some aspects of what is observed, while discounting other aspects because they appear irrelevant or counterintuitive. Thus, frames provide meaning through selective simplification [...].

Concurring with the above ideas, Chong and Druckman (2007 p.104) note: “Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualisation of an issue or reorient their thinking to an issue”.

## 3. Background Literature

Since the establishment of the first telecentre in Sweden in the 1980s (Rathgeber, 2002; Etta & Parvyn-Wamahiu, 2003; Parkinson, 2005), many telecentres have subsequently been established in different parts of the world. The rapid spread of telecentres particularly in developing countries in the 1990s has been spurred on by the thinking that frames access to ICTs as having potential to support development initiatives (Hudson, 1999). With the setting up of the telecentres, several researchers have conducted studies to evaluate how different centres were functioning in various locations. A part of these studies has focused on understanding the use and non-use of telecentres in different locales (see Cheuk, Atang and Lo, 2012; Sey et al, 2013; Macueve, et al, 2009; Mtega & Malekan, 2009; Chilimo, 2008;

Parkinson & Lauzon, 2008; Vannini et al, n.d.; Oestmann & Dymand, n.d.; Etta & Parvyn-Wamahiu, 2003; Chikowore-Kabwato & Ajiferuke, 2002).

Methodologically, the research on users and non-users of telecentres has drawn on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Surveys and in-depth interviews are two research methods popular with most researchers. Common areas of focus in the above-mentioned studies include assessments of the equipment used at particular telecentres and the services offered, discussions on the kinds of people frequenting the centres as well as the types of information that the users access. In studies looking at non-users (see Vannini et al, n.d.), researchers endeavour to understand factors that hinder the use of the Centres.

In discussions about the kinds of people who use/do not use the telecentres, researchers often make the point that there are inequalities in terms of access to and usage of ICTs; men are more likely to use telecentres than women (see Ojo, 2005; Rathgeber, 2002). In a study on telecentre experiences in five African countries (Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Uganda, South Africa), for example, Etta and Parvyn-Wamahiu (2003 p.xxii) capture the gender disparities in the following manner: “In Mali, 77% of the users were men, and at Manhica in Mozambique, 63% of the users were men. The trend in Senegal and Uganda was similar. In Senegal 70% of users were men”. In a study conducted in Mozambique (Manhica and Sussundega), Macueve et al (2009) note that while most women made use of mobile phones and listened to the community radio, they did not, however, use the telecentres in their communities. The few women who made use of the Centres were health professionals, employees of non-governmental organisations, students, nuns and telecentre workers.

A number of factors have been highlighted to explain why few women use telecentres. In the Mali case study (see Etta & Parvyn-Wamahiu, 2003), for example, the high cost associated with using the Centres deterred most women. In the study by Hallberg et al (2011), some of the participants contended that many women were intimidated by technologies. Macueve et al, (2009) note that some non-users thought telecentres were for educated people who spoke Portuguese.

While the above studies are evidence of researchers’ interest in understanding women’s use and non-use of telecentres, these discussions are, nonetheless, largely embedded within broad discussions about users and non-users of telecentres (Hallberg et al, 2011; Etta & Parvyn-Wamahiu, 2003). Not many studies are dedicated to specially understand how women experience telecentres in the context of their daily lives in rural communities. This gap in knowledge is peculiar in a context like South Africa, for example, where women make up 52% of the total population and 47% of them reside in rural areas (Bobo, 2011). This study deliberately attempts to give full attention to women’s voices and to understanding their experiences. Campbell and Wasco (2000 p.777) contend that in general, “[...] science reflects the social values and concerns of dominant societal groups [and that] research projects in the social sciences have often ignored women and issues of concern to women [...]”. Commenting on research conducted in psychology in particular and in other disciplines in general, Campbell and Wasco (2000) further explain that the inherent sexist bias in these studies results in theorising that largely resonates with men’s experiences only.

As noted in earlier sections, this study proposes to couch the discussion on women’s engagement with the telecentres within the frame/framing theory, something that has not been explored in ICTD theory work. While the theory will assist in understanding how

women conceptualise the telecentres, the authors of this paper will attempt to extend the ideas in the theory by drawing on some of the salient findings of this research.

## **4. Research Methodology**

This study is located within the qualitative research paradigm because this approach was better suited to understanding the experiences and perspectives of users and non-users of telecentres in South Africa and Tanzania (Morrow, 2007; Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott & Davidson, 2002). The qualitative approach to research allowed for a detailed probe (for purposes of understanding) the meanings that research participants attributed to their experiences (Tracy, 2010; Morrow, 2007; Golafshani, 2003). Another reason this study can be characterised as qualitative is that it took place within the everyday context in which women users and non-users of telecentres lived (Golafshani, 2003; Näslund, 2002). Moving away from quantitative studies where researchers strive for controlled and ‘independent’ environments which are free of societal values, the context was considered as adding value to the study. Working in the communities also allowed researchers to observe the ways people interacted with the telecentres.

One limitation that is often associated with the qualitative methodology is that the findings of studies such as this one cannot be generalized to larger populations (Atieno, 2009; Strelitz, 2005; Schrøder et al., 2003). In an attempt to address the generalisability quandary, it might be useful to conduct similar context specific studies in other communities to gain a more ‘holistic’ picture and a better understanding of diverse experiences.

### **4.1 Research Design**

This paper is part of a bigger study analyzing the role of telecentres on women empowerment in rural Tanzania and South Africa. The choice of Tanzania and South Africa offers us an opportunity to discuss the ways in which women from countries at different levels of social and economic development think about the telecentres in their communities.

The sample for this study was drawn from two rural communities in South Africa (Centane and Cala) and three rural districts surrounding the telecentres in Tanzania (Kongwa, Kilosa, and Sengerema). The sample included women who used the telecentres (users) and those who stayed close to the Centres but did not use the facilities (non-users). Purposive sampling was used to select the users at the telecentres while the non-users were accessed from the communities around the Centres. Using semi-structured interviews, a total of 20 women users and 20 women non-users were interviewed in South Africa between July and September 2014 while 32 women users and 32 women non-users were interviewed in Tanzania from September to December 2014. With the permission of the respondents, all interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed and translated. Consent was sought from each of the women who participated in the study. The researchers in all the sites explained what the study was about and the fact that interviewees had the option not to participate in the study. The participants were also informed that they could opt out of the interview at any point and that their names would be kept confidential. All the women who participated signed consent forms.

In Tanzania, most users and non-users were aged between 26 and 35 years. More than half of the telecentre users (68.8%) had acquired an ordinary secondary school education, while 56.3% non-users had primary education. Most users and non-users had an income of less 50,000 TShs (US\$25). In South Africa, the interviewees had an age range of between 16 and 56 years. The users of the telecentres in Cala and Centane (South Africa) had at least a

secondary school qualification. Others mentioned that they had done professional courses after completing high school. Similar to Tanzania, the majority of the non-users in South Africa had primary level education with one stating that she had never attended school. Interviews were conducted in local languages of the areas (isiXhosa and Swahili) respectively.

Textual analysis was used in this study to make sense of the findings. The interview transcripts were read three times. In the first two readings, words and phrases that women in this research used to refer to telecentres were highlighted. The final reading of the transcripts entailed drawing out statements that best illustrated the aforementioned frames. The section that follows provides some information on the research sites.

#### *4.1.1 Case description: Tanzania and South Africa*

The study was carried out in districts of Kongwa, Sengerema, and Kilosa; all these districts had telecentres. The Sengerema telecentre is located in the Sengerema district, a rural district in the Mwanza region. It was established by the government in 2001 in partnership with various international partners. Kilosa Rural Services and Electronic Communication (KIRSEC) is located in a rural district of Kilosa, Morogoro region. It is a for-profit business established in 2000 by Robinson Cooperate Corporation (RCC). Songa Mbele Maarifa Centre is located in a rural of Kongwa region. It was established by ALIN NGO in collaboration with DONNET in 2012. In general, the majority of telecentres in South Africa are in rural areas. Centane and Cala are located in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The telecentre at Cala worked in partnership with the University of South Africa (UNISA), a leading distance-learning South African institution (Minnaar, 2011). The telecentre at Centane was located in a Thusong Service Centre which housed the Department of Home Affairs. Thusong Service Centres are one-stop centres meant to address the inequalities in accessing government services such as Social Development and Home Affairs.

## **5. Findings**

### **5.1 Telecentres as places for making photocopies**

Most non-users of the telecentres, particularly those in Centane framed the Centre in their locale as primarily a space for making photocopies. “I know that telecentres help people do copies” (Centane). Participant 1 in Centane explains: “The reason for the establishment of [the] telecentre is because it helps people in making copies of ID’s, certificates [...]”. A respondent in Centane, Participant 2 says: “I know that at the computer Centre we make copies. When I go there I usually make copies [...]. I have never used a computer but I do see them in the telecentre when I have gone to make copies. This is what the Telecentre helps me with, copies”. Making a similar point, Participant 3 (Centane) says that she was made aware of the telecentre by her mother who had gone there because she needed to make copies of her certificates. “I came to know about it [the Telecentre] when I came to do ID copies” (Participant 10, Centane). Rega, Vannini, Fino, and Cantoni’s (2013) study on the framing of telecentres in Mozambique also revealed similar findings.

While most respondents constituted the telecentre as a place to make photocopies, Participant 29 and Participant 30 (Centane) mentioned that they thought the Centre was somehow connected to the Department of Home Affairs. Participant 30 explains: “[...] I know the Telecentre and I came to know about it when I came to do my child’s grant. I had to make

copies and I saw it. I don't know why it was established because I thought its Home Affairs. I thought it's for people who come to do their ID's. I didn't know that people had to pay".

In addition to the making of copies, a few respondents highlighted that they went to the telecentre because they wanted to print documents (Participant 4, Centane). In Centane, the fact that most people came to use the telecentre to make copies needed by the Department of Home Affairs (which is in close proximity with the Centre) reinforced the assumption that the telecentre was primarily a place for making photocopies.

Speaking about telecentres in the aforementioned manner worked to make invisible other services offered at the Centres. Thus, when the women entered the telecentres, they did not ask to do anything else besides photocopies. Interestingly, the presence of several computers did not assist the women in questioning their own thinking and views.

## **5.2 Telecentres as places for educated people**

A point emanating from the interviews with the non-users in both Centane and Cala is the idea that the telecentres were places for 'Other' people. The 'Other' people were constituted as educated people, people in formal employment and students. Similar findings were revealed by other studies in Malawi and Mozambique (Rega et al., 2013; Vannini and Rega, 2012; Kapondera, 2014). In the current study, the respondents did not view themselves as part of the people who could use the telecentres. "I think this computer Centre is targeting those individuals that are educated" (Participant 3, Centane). Participant 4 spoke of the Centre as place for people who were presently studying. Participant 5 and Participant 6 (Cala) said that they saw the Centre as a useful place for young students because they needed to find information for their school work. "The computer Centre was established to help our kids to get the training that they want" (Participant 6, Cala). Participant 6 adds that the Centre is "targeted to everyone who has the right to use it and who qualifies for using it".

While most of the respondents did not elaborate what they meant by 'educated' people, two respondents (one from Cala and one from Centane) provided some idea, albeit minimal of what they meant: "I think it [the Telecentre] is targeted [at] people who have knowledge and people who have passed Grade 12"; "[...] I think the Centre targets people who already know about how to use the computer because when I once went there I noticed that there is no one assisting people in the computer lab".

Although non-users largely referred to telecentres as spaces for the 'educated,' the respondents at Cala thought that the telecentre was primarily meant for University of South Africa (UNISA) students. "It [the telecentre] is for people who are studying through UNISA" (Participant 7, Cala). Also making reference to people who use the telecentre, Participant 8 explained that she thought that the Centre was meant for people who were working.

Separating herself from the 'in-group' of educated people, Participant 9 says: "I think telecentres target people who are educated because that is what I can see and since I dropped out of school when I was doing Grade 3, I am not sure. I don't know anything about the Computer Centres [...]". Positioning herself as an 'Outsider,' Participant 10 (Centane) argues that she did not want to use computers because she was old and she did not have any knowledge relating to computers. She concludes: "I can only see people use them [computers]".

In Tanzania, interviewed users from all districts (Kilosa, Sengerema and Kongwa) also framed telecentres as places for educated people. Even non-users in Kilosa and Sengerema

framed telecentres as spaces reserved for learned people. One research participant in Kongwa noted that telecentres were: "...for the purpose of getting education and coping with modern technology". Another respondent in Sengerema said that: "[the] main users of telecentres are educated people like teachers, university students, and college students [...]". While the research participants did not always use the terms 'educated people' to speak about those they thought were meant to use the telecentres, it was common to hear non-users talk about people with 'computer skills' as being the primary targets of the Centres. A participant in Kilosa said that the Centre was: "only [for] those who are skillful in using [the] computer". Another interviewee in Sengerema noted that the telecentres were: "only those with computer skills". A different respondent in Sengerema also said that: "All those who have knowledge of computers can use telecentres". Despite that non-users had not used telecentres, they also referred to telecentres as places for people with computer skills. In Kongwa, one respondent also said that: "It is just because they [the users] have computer knowledge, and they know how to use internet".

Referring to the telecentre as a space for 'Other' people who were 'superior' by virtue of having an education and/or computer skills needs interrogating. This idea served as a mechanism to self-regulate oneself and to justify not using the telecentre. Re-framing the Centre as an inclusive space that everyone can use regardless of educational qualifications might be something that the staff at the Centre can consider doing.

### **5.3 A place for UNISA students and job seekers**

While most non-users spoke of telecentres as spaces for educated people, the accounts by users particularly at Cala seemed to corroborate this account. Similar to what Participant 7, a non-user at Cala said, Participant 11 (Cala) who uses the Centre said: "This Centre targets [...] mostly UNISA students. In my understanding, a computer Centre is a place for information and knowledge where you can study and do assignments". Most of the users who were interviewed in Cala noted that they were students studying through UNISA. Similar to Participant 11's account above, the respondents pointed out that they mostly used the telecentre to do and submit assignments for the various courses that they were studying (for example, Participant 12, Participant 11, Participant 13, Participant 14, Participant 15, Participant 16, Participant 17, Participant 18). Participant 19 (Cala) credits the telecentre staff for having assisted her in applying for and registering as a UNISA student. Speaking about who she thought the telecentre targeted, Participant 20 says: "I think the Centre targets people who are studying". In her narrative about the Centre, Participant 18 (Cala) says that she thought that the Centre was established to assist UNISA students. She continues: "The computer Centre is targeting the students from UNISA. I am not sure of other people from this community [if they] are allowed to use this computer Centre. I only know UNISA students". Participant 21 and Participant 18 (Cala), for example, note that they download their UNISA study guides at the telecentre.

Although Participant 29 does not specifically speak about the use of the telecentre being confined to UNISA students only, she, nonetheless, also speaks about the Centre generally targeting learners only. Participant 24 (Centane) said: "I think the most targeted users for this computer Centre are those ones [...] that have completed their Matric and want to do their computer certificate". Participant 24 went on to highlight that she was actually a student herself and used the Centre to do her assignments. Participant 22 (Cala) argues that in addition to targeting students, the telecentre also serves educators, working people and business people.



In addition to the Centre being used by students, the research participants in this study also spoke of the Centre being used by job seekers. “People can get jobs through Google” (Participant 11, Cala). Also making a similar observation, Participant 18 notes that people get jobs through doing online searches. Participant 12 and Participant 22 also spoke about some people using the Centre to look for employment online. Participant 23 (Centane) thinks that the telecentre was established for learners who had completed their Matric but did not have money to go to university. In her view, the telecentre equipped these school leavers with computer skills that helped them in getting jobs.

In some interviews, respondents were able to give examples of people they knew who sought and found jobs online. Participant 24 (Centane), for example, said she had acquired computer skills and found a job through using the telecentre. Later in the interview, Participant 24 noted that she also knew of a man who had been able to find a job via the internet.

Speaking about the telecentre as primarily a place for students and job seekers is problematic. It worked to exclude other people in the community who were neither studying nor interested in finding employment. It also served to reinforce the sense of inadequacy that the non-users already felt.

Although in interviews carried out in South Africa, UNISA students featured dominantly as the perceived users of the telecentres, in the Tanzania interviews, university students did not occupy such a privileged position in the imagination of the respondents. The ‘Other’ was identified as “children, Standard 7 and Form 4 leavers” (interview in Kongwa), the “mentally fit” (interview in Kongwa), “all educated people” (interviews in Kongwa, Kilosa, Sengerema). Another respondent in Kongwa framed telecentres as places, “for everyone who is capable of using the computer or ready to study...” An interviewee in Kongwa said: “all men and women can use the telecentre, but students mainly use the Centres as a support to their studies”. Another response in Kongwa was that: “telecentres target students in order to support their studies but also other people can use [the Centres]”.

Non-users in the research sites in Tanzania also framed telecentres as places for students. Referring to the students that use the telecentre, one respondent in Kongwa said that: “maybe they [the students] want to study and understand the things which are in the computer”. Another respondent also said that: “they [the students] are using the Centre for the purpose of getting education and to cope with modern technology”. Non-users also thought of telecentres as places for people to acquire ICT skills that would enable them to be employed.

As already mentioned above, framing telecentres as places that can only be accessed by ‘Other’ people served to limit the women from actually using and benefiting from the telecentres.

## **5.4 Telecentres as places for everyone**

While most of the users talked about the telecentres primarily being designed for students and employment seekers, Participant 25 and Participant 26 (Centane) regarded the Centres as community resources for everyone. Participant 25 elaborates: “The Centre targets everyone. At first I thought a telecentre is a place for people who are educated and also who know how to use a computer and I was scared of going there”. Also seeing a broader target audience for the Centre, Participant 26 said: “I think this computer centre is targeting everyone in general that want to use it. I think the aim of the telecentre is to help people that want to type their CVs, print their work, enable people to use the internet, it does everything”. Participant 27 (Centane) said previously she thought that the Telecentre was for people to make copies.

Now, she together with Participant 28 (Centane) think that the Centre is supposed to help everyone in the community.

The above narratives are important in that they work to counter the dominant accounts that depicted the telecentre as an enclave for students and job seekers. While these accounts challenge mainstream conceptualisations, these voices are, however, outnumbered by those that constitute the telecentre as exclusive.

Similar to findings in interviews conducted in South Africa, almost all telecentre users interviewed in Tanzania (Kongwa, Kilosa, and Sengerema) constituted the Centres as spaces for everyone. Of the 12 telecentre users that were interviewed in Kongwa, 10 of them spoke of the telecentre as a place for everyone in the community. The pattern could also be identified in interviews carried out in Kilosa; 8 of the 10 interview participants noted that the telecentre was meant for “all people”. In Sengerema, interviewees gave the same response (9 of 10).

While users generally framed telecentres as places for all people, there were a few participants across all three research sites in Tanzania who qualified what they meant by the term ‘everyone’. One respondent in Kongwa said: “It [the telecentre] is for all people who know how to read and write”. Another said this about the telecentre: “[The telecentre’s] target is students but also all other people. It target[s] students in order to support them into their studies”. Telecentres were also qualified as places for everyone who is eager to use them. One respondent in Kongwa said that: “telecentres are a place for all people who are willing to use the Centre”. In Kilosa, a respondent said the Centres were meant for “all people who have computer skills”. In Sengerema, respondents narrated that telecentres were meant for all people of different age groups and gender. One respondent in Sengerema mentioned that: “generally, all kinds of people [regardless of] age and gender are allowed to use computer Centre...” Another response in Kongwa noted that: “the telecentre is for all because even the advertisements state that the course offered at the Centre is for all”. In Sengerema, a respondent also noted that all people could use the telecentres. One respondent said that: “All people regardless of their age can use the telecentre”.

While the majority of the respondents concurred that telecentres were for all people, the fact that some users went on to ‘restrict’ (in their minds) the kinds of people who could use the Centres needs interrogating. It might be worthwhile for telecentre management to conduct public education sessions in which ideas like the ones alluded to above can be dispelled. An ironic finding that is peculiar to the interviews carried out in Tanzania is that non-users across the three research sites (Kongwa, Kilosa, Sengerema) framed telecentres as places for everyone. This is despite the fact that these respondents had not themselves used the Centres.

## **6. Discussion and recommendations**

While telecentres were originally conceived as spaces where all members of the community could benefit from, in both Tanzania and South Africa the findings of this study show a mismatch between the ideal scenario and the reality on the ground in the rural context. Even though most respondents (users in South Africa as well as users and non-users in Tanzania) spoke of telecentres as spaces for all people, nonetheless, the idea that the telecentres were meant for a handful of elite in the communities was dominant. The ‘deserving’ users were framed in most cases were the educated. Similar findings were reported in another study of the Lupaso community telecentre in Malawi (Kapondera, 2014). These perceptions could be a result of ‘educated people’ having been the early adopters of the facilities. For example, UNISA students could use the facilities for ‘free’ hence they were among the early ‘educated’

people who made use of the telecentre. To address this, there is need for the telecentre management to carry out concerted education campaigns to dispel some of these myths.

In the case of Centane, the close proximity of the telecentre to the Department of Home Affairs caused several people to assume that the Centre was a place for making copies needed by the department. At Cala the dominance of UNISA students created the impression that the facility was exclusive to UNISA students. These two examples illustrate how the location and domination of usage could affect the framing. It might not be practical and feasible to deliberately limit the times UNISA students use the centre. Here we recommend telecentre management should consider conducting education sessions where alternative usage of the facilities are promoted. Some education sessions could teach community members how to use computers and how the computers can be relevant to their lives. The management can also inform community members of the range of services (beyond photocopying) that are available at the Centre. It might be worthwhile for telecentre managers to find ways of re-branding the Centres as spaces that all community members are welcome to use even if they are not part of the dominant group.

Although it is important that telecentres ‘re-brand’ themselves, it is also important for telecentre management to revisit the assumptions that informed the setting up of the Centres in the first place. It might be worthwhile to have conversations with the community members on what their needs are and how the Centres can meet those needs.

Regarding the theory used in this paper, while the tenets encapsulated in the frame/framing theory were useful, the findings of this research hint towards extending the idea that “frames are the way we see things and define what we see” (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli 2013 p.1). Beyond merely framing the telecentres in their communities in different ways, in most cases, the particular frames that women deployed had real life implications on women’s behaviours. The women who considered the telecentres in their locales as spaces for making photocopies, for example, largely only used the centres for nothing else except photocopying. They did not venture to do other things. What, however, complicates our neat and linear proposition is the fact that some women framed the telecentres in one way but behaved in a different manner. For example, while some non-users in Tanzania framed the telecentres as spaces for ‘everyone,’ there was a disconnect in the ways they acted; they themselves did not use the telecentres. Thus, in extending the ideas in the current frame/framing theory, the authors of this paper add that in the majority of cases (with some exceptions), the frames people use have consequences on the ways they engage with the particular objects they frame.

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